

THE MEASURE

A JOURNAL OF POETRY



Poems by David P. Berenberg, Rolfe Humphries,
Glenn Ward Dresbach, Mildred Plew Merryman,
Louise Townsend Nicholl, Marjorie Meeker,
Joseph Auslander and Others — — — — —

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Contents

POEMS	Page
Desert Legend. By Glenn Ward Dresbach.....	3
Empty Corral. By Glenn Ward Dresbach.....	4
Sea Shells. By Annice Calland.....	4
Echoes. By David P. Berenberg.....	5
Mountain Road. By Belle Turnbull.....	6
Jewelry. By Annie Higgins.....	6
My Hands. By Annie Higgins.....	6
Midnight. By Annie Higgins.....	7
So Fair a Sorrow. By Anna Karfunkle.....	7
Song. By Allan Davis.....	8
Termination. By Howard McKinley Corning.....	8
Sentimental History. By Marjorie Meeker.....	9
Only the Bright Derision. By Marjorie Meeker.....	9
Mistress Death. By Rolfe Humphries.....	10
Eloi, Eloi. By Rolfe Humphries.....	10
Sonnet. By Lindley Williams Hubbell.....	11
Initiate. By Louise Townsend Nicholl.....	12
Ghoul. By Joseph Auslander.....	13
Gypsy. By Vernon Patterson.....	14
To a Pickaninny Eating a Persimmon. By Mildred Plew Merryman	14
INDEX	
Numbers 25-26.....	15
GUARANTORS	
Guarantors of The Measure.....	19

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Desert Legend

WHERE tawny cliffs sprawl with their rippled manes
Of golden haze, a river creeps below
As if to hide in shadows that they throw
And steal past them into the desert plains.
But in the channel, parched for lack of rains,
A yawning cavern-mouth is raised, and low
Sounds of an endless purr come while the flow
Of snow-born water cools the throat that drains.

Go close to it and purring turns to thunder
And monstrous teeth of stone drip silver foam
And waters fade in shadows, whirling faster,
But it is told a captive chief plunged under
From foes and swam to daylight and came home
And prayed for drouth that brought his foes disaster.

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Empty Corral

THE ground, once trodden, no more shows
The print of hoofs—a slow wind blows.

The willow posts, with dark wire bound,
Grow boughs—a spring creeps underground.

But swings and sags with its own heft
The gate, the loneliest thing that's left.

Slow shadows move across the place—
The clouds are drifting out to space.

—Glenn Ward Dresbach

Sea Shells

O SEA SHELL sing me a song of the sea,
Sing of ships and sails and barges;
O Sea Shell sing me a song of the sea,
Sing of scents and sounds and largess;
Sing far and low where the salt winds blow
And tell of the things the oceans know;
Sing clear and high of a midnight sky
Where great cloud-ships go sailing by—
O Sea Shell sing for I love the sea!

O Sea Shell sing me a song of the sea,
Sing of gulls and dunes and ledges;
O Sea Shell sing me a song of the sea,
Sing of love of the ocean's edges;
Sing o'er and o'er of the wild sea roar
In raging storms when rain clouds pour;
Sing low and clear for the harbor near
For the sailor home to love and cheer—
O Sea Shell sing for I love the sea!

—Annice Calland

Echoes

HAVE you seen the surf flaming in the moonlight?
Have you seen the fires gleaming
Over the water,
While the embers of our fire died away?
Have you listened to the whisper of the waters
Under the rhythmic booming of the sea?

Those were the fires of Carthage;
That was the surf on Ithaca;
Those were the whispers that Ulysses heard
Of siren-song.

Have you seen the dawn burning
From the top of the mountain?
Smashing the massed white cloud bank
And flooding the plainsland with gold?

That was the dawn that Hannibal
Flung on the fields of Italy!

Have you counted the stars?
Aldebaran and Pleiades,
Orion and the moons of Jupiter,
And all the last stars of the Milky Way?

Those were the stars the Three Men saw,
And one more.
What happened to the Star of Bethlehem?

—David P. Berenberg.

Mountain Road

FOLLOWING the trail's will,
Skirting round a boulder,
I came upon a gravel road
Across the hill's shoulder.

Rain had washed it maiden-smooth;
And—oh, but this was sweet!—
The only tracks I saw on it
Were of a rabbit's feet.

—*Belle Turnbull*

Jewelry

I HAVE talked to many things—
Foolishly, I will admit—
Talked to my hand and to the rings
That made a sudden art of it.

And to my hand I have said this:
"So, this quaintly contoured mold,
This poignant skin that sunlights kiss,
You must adorn with studded gold."

And to my rings: "Scorning to lie
In ivory case on satin mesh,
You find your meaning's fullest cry
In this relation to thin flesh."

My Hands

ONCE my hands were glad and warm,
Yet placid in their pride,
With never a feeling for the storm
Tearing the world outside.

Now when I hear the deep winds blow
My hands will quickly fold,
And lock themselves together—so,
As though they fear the cold.

Midnight

ONCE I did a senseless thing:
I raised my arm into the night;
Just then a moon shone in to fling
My arm into a marbled light.
It seemed not mine but something old
And dead as though it had been there,
Reaching terribly into the cold
Since arms were arms and air was air.

I watched it as it hung there, lit
Like another moon to chasten space,
Until I grew afraid of it
And pulled it back into its place.

—Annie Higgins

So Fair a Sorrow

THERE is so fair a sorrow at my heart
So searching bright and exquisite a pain—
It flashes like a star through midnight spaces
A thousand mirrors give it back again!

Such my proud spirit's wistful exultation
From vaunting joy it keeps its dream apart;
A mellow cadence sings within my silence—
There is so fair a sorrow at my heart!

—Anna Karfunkle

Song

BY Maytime stars that hover
Above the hills, and show
How plums and pear blooms cover
The orchards as with snow;

By breezes from the valley
Where bonfires lift and sway,
And singing voices dally
To steal one's heart away;

By these I charge you straitly,
Oh time that still is hid,
Betray me not so greatly
As Long Ago once did.

Keep all the charming glimmer,
Keep spring and me apart;
If one be dull, the dimmer
The pang within the heart.

—Allan Davis

Termination

OH, night will find us as it has all children,
Grown over-weary and of life too sore;
We shall be too fed of truth to want then
The lollypops of dreams, or hunger for
The saccharined entreaties of the flesh;
No outward-swinging door will call our feet,

Nor any meadow, morning-kissed and fresh;
Night's door will close and rust fast when we meet.
Nor shall we care if evening's casement closes
On ways too-overgrown and shadow-cast,
We who, as children, gathered all life's roses
Will strew them down the gardens of the past,
Save one we plucked together on a hill—
And night will strew its petals where it will.

—Howard McKinley Corning

Sentimental History

RESISTLESS time, they said, would break
And temper the aloof and frigid
Stillness she had; and time would take
The pride too sure, the will too rigid.

The hard gray grinding of each day,
The fine attrition of each second,
Cut and carved and smoothed away
More than they had wished or reckoned,

Leaving the unsuspected bright
Core of her, gay with mocking pledges,
This quick and dazzling lance of light,
This burning blade with perilous edges.

Only the Bright Derision

THE hour that seemed a petal
With colors light and sure,
Was Time, a steel-strange metal
Where only scars endure.

At which the baffled, narrow
Lift of my thought must beat,
A small and blunted arrow
Falling in quick defeat.

Only the bright derision
Of your cold smile or word
Can cleave that stark division
Like an enchanted sword.

—*Marjorie Meeker*

Mistress Death

THERE being no one in this living town
With whom I may thus lovingly lie down,
I know a distant one, embracing whom
My pitiful self will easily forget
These all too disappointing other ones
And she is surely waiting for me. Yet
Her unelastic bone-encircled womb
Barren of all but light and air, suggests
No possibility of fair-haired sons;
All her white nakedness may be displayed
Without exciting me; she has no breasts,
And what should be my warmly moving mesh
Is a cold girdle, for her limbs are made
Without the soft sweet element of flesh.

Eloi, Eloi

I USED to think that hanging on a cross
Meant death of an easy, gentle-Jesus sort:
Three hours of anguish,—after all, how short!
A gradual dissolution, with no loss
Of that sad dignity which martyrs need
To consummate a solemn sacrifice,
And thieves and thorns and soldiers playing dice
And spear wounds that appropriately bleed
Make a viaticum that must afford
Much satisfaction for a mournful Lord
Passing on His way to Paradise.

I didn't know. That was before I knew.

And here I am now, crucified on you
Where every one can see me, white and sick,
A sorry spectacle before the town.

A man on a cross, I find, attempts to kick
In wretched desperate agony, that fails
Against the resolute restraint of nails.

Inexorably nailed to you, I cry
Aloud in darkness, feebly wonder why
My Mother cannot help me, standing by

And I know I am God's own Son. But I can't get down.

—*Rolfe Humphries*

Sonnet

LOOK in my face and search there as you will,
Nothing will meet your question but a lad
That knows no more of life than to be glad,
And whistle tunes, and lie upon a hill;
A clear-eyed child that should he see or touch
A lovely thing, will lift to you a smile,
And you will take his hand a little while,
Not knowing why, nor caring very much.

You have not heard how on a certain day
A lonely centaur, parching for a drink,
Unearthed a spring and stooping to the brink
Screamed out to see the thing he could not say;
And how from that time forth he runs his course
In madness, from the hoof-beats of a horse.

—*Lindley Williams Hubbell*

Initiate

I WILL draw back from the brink
Of tears; I will not drink.
My flying feet will halt,
My hurrying hands will shrink
From skinning its film of salt,
From tearing the thin tissue,
The membrane, from the quick
Of the bitter-sweet shallow.
I will not hold or hallow
This moment, or give it issue.
My hands clutch back to the thick
Assurance of my breast—
I will tighten my body to rest.
How came I here, a stranger,
Close to the spring of danger?

Now were my figure cast—
My backward-moving feet
Poised in a slow retreat—
It would be as the first
Woman or the last,
Either no woman's daughter
Or without a child,
Who could not know her thirst
Until she came to water,
And found it salt-defiled.
The metals for the casting
To hold me in this rigid
Wonder should be as frigid
As ice, and no more lasting

Now I am unconfused—
No body can be so bruised
By water as by waste
Which taints the thing unused.
I start in glorious haste
To touch the quick, to taste—
Now, with a shining rush
Through the dark underbrush.

—*Louise Townsend Nicholl*

Ghoul

I SAW the half moon on his back,
The Great Bow of the stars go slack;
The houses like a fever chart
Shook with the beating of my heart
As I saw Sagittarius go
Slack, and the string slip from his bow:
Gold slid dripping; it went thus
Loosened and illustrious;
Exaggerated pines whose brittle
Branches burned with frosty spittle
Scratched gaps in the blue
Lucidity and let stars through,
Till it seemed the stars somehow
Hissed and crackled at each bough;
Shadows with slow sullen hair
Huddled on the breathing stair
Private to the moon and there
Roused the reminiscent dead
Chilled, uneasy, visited
Night crouched cougar-wise,
A huge cat rocking behind his eyes.

—*Joseph Auslander*

Gypsy

ALL day beneath her tent of red and yellow,
Nesting in green and red and yellow petticoats
She sits, unravelling knotted wrinkles in the palms
Of clumsy lovers.

All day beneath her tent of red and yellow
She mumbles miracles of love into their palms
Who would cry out with fear of love if they could read
Her palms aright.

—*Vernon Patterson*

To a Pickaninny Eating a Persimmon

PICKANINNY, black child, in the cabin door,
Munch your gold persimmon to the soft sweet core!
Comes another sun roll, you shall wake to see
Rust upon the branches of your green gold tree.

Blight will put its cold mouth to each tingling shoot,
Drain the yellow sunshine from the warm ripe fruit;
You may keep as barter for the noons of now
Sound of winter surf wind breaking in a bough.

Hard behind the marshes where the red suns reel,
Three gray fates sit nodding at the wheel;
Never tarry, black child—subtly runs the mould;
Few the limbs that lavish pickaninny gold.

—*Mildred Plew Merryman*

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INDEX, Numbers 25-36

March 1923—February 1924

POEMS

After Plenty, Bernard Raymond.....July
Akins, Zoe, A Night, London.....September
Alling, Kenneth Slade, To One Who Asked.....May
The Bird.....July
To a Maryland Yellow-Throat.....July
The Owl.....September
Crickets.....October
Three Women at Low Tide.....November
Boast.....November
Low Tide.....November
Pater.....January
Ambition, Elizabeth Stewart Metzger.....November
Answers, Marie Emilie Gilchrist.....December
Apprentice, Maud Elfrid Uschold.....December
Auslander, Joseph, Dead Love.....June
Jezebel.....June
Moon Cattle.....June
Il Magnopoco.....August
I Went Out Alone.....September
Ghoul.....February
Autumn Horsemen, The, John Gould Fletcher.....July

Beata Bearice, Arnault de Ventadour.....May
Berenberg, David P., Echoes.....February
Bird, The, Kenneth Slade Alling.....July
Boast, Kenneth Slade Alling.....November
Bogan, Louise, The Stones.....June
Trio.....June
Bowdoin, Peter, "Love in Whose Name".....May
Bowen, Stirling, The Milkman's Boy.....December
The Cobbler's Daughter.....December
Brook Under Ice, The, Glenn Ward Dresbach.....December

Buona-Sera, Guiseppe Cautela.....November
Burgess, Robert Louis, Girls.....May
But Like Mad Builders, Marjorie Meeker.....December
Bynner, Witter (with Kiang Kang-hu), Chinese Translations.....October

Calland, Annice, Sea Shells.....February
Cautela, Guiseppe, Buona-Sera.....November
Good-bye.....November
Charms For Six, Elizabeth J. Coatsworth.....March
Child Much Loved of Poets, A, Jeanne d' Orge.....May

Chinese Translations, Witter Bynner and Kiang Kang-hu.....October
Choice, The, Elisabeth Thomas.....January
Cleopatra As Mary Garden: The Cydnus, Arnault de Ventadour.....May
Coatsworth, Elizabeth J., Charms For Six.....March
Cobbler's Daughter, The, Stirling Bowen.....December
Cobwebbed Trapeze Performer, Prescott Hoard.....June

Colum, Padraic, Kerry Nursing Song.....August
Flowers.....January
Cook, Harold Lewis, Tension.....July
Corning, Howard McKinley, Termination.....February
Cosmic Scandal, John Macy.....April
Cottage in the Catskills, A, Charles Divine.....January
Country Rhymes, Orrick Johns.....October
Couplets in Criticism, John Macy.....May
Crool, Peter, Narcissus, A Foreground.....March
Curtis, Christine Turner, Penitent.....January

Dalton, Power, World's May Darken.....December

INDEX—Continued

<i>Dames of Old Wagbery</i> , Arnault de Ventadour.....	May
Daniels, Earl, <i>Hysteria</i>	March
"If I May Choose My Dream".....	March
<i>On My Table, A Moth</i>	March
Davis, Allan, <i>Song</i>	February
de Ventadour, Arnault, <i>Beata Beatrice</i>	May
<i>Cleopatra as Mary Garden: The Cydnus</i>	May
<i>Dames of Old Wagbery</i>	May
<i>Dona Ana at the Judgment</i>	May
<i>Phaedra Pasiphaea</i>	May
<i>Dead Leaves</i> , Louise Townsend Nicholl.....	November
<i>Dead Love</i> , Joseph Auslander.....	June
<i>Desert Legend</i> , Glenn Ward Dresbach.....	February
<i>Divine, Charles, A Cottage in the Catskills</i>	January
<i>Sea Gulls</i>	January
<i>Dona Ana at the Judgment</i> , Arnault de Ventadour.....	May
d'Orge, Jeanne, <i>A Child Much Loved of Poets</i>	May
<i>Interiors</i>	May
<i>The Sink</i>	May
<i>Dream Fear</i> , Ruth Lechlitter.....	December
Dresbach, Glenn Ward, <i>Brook Under Ice, The Empty Corral</i>	January
<i>Desert Legend</i>	February
<i>Echoes</i> , David P. Berenberg.....	February
Eloi, Eloi, Rolfe Humphries.....	February
<i>Empty Corral</i> , Glenn Ward Dresbach.....	February
<i>Enchanter's Handmaiden</i> , Elinor Wylie.....	October
<i>Escape</i> , Raymond Holden.....	June
<i>Etcher, The</i> , Benjamin Rosenbaum.....	June
Evans, Abbie Huston, <i>The Spread Table</i>	July
<i>The Light on the Rock</i>	July
<i>The Vine</i>	November
<i>Will He Give Him a Stone</i>	November
Evans, Ernestine, <i>Winter Woods</i>	October
<i>Fall</i> , Mark Van Doren.....	October
<i>First Spring</i> , Nicholas Kopeloff.....	June
<i>First Voyage</i> , Harold Vinal.....	August
Flanagan, W. L., <i>The Rabbit Hunt</i>	November
Fletcher, John Gould, <i>The Autumn Horsemen</i>	July
Fletcher, Myla, <i>Tell Us, Charon!</i>	April
<i>Turns</i>	May
<i>Floral Decorations for Bananas</i> , Wallace Stevens.....	April
<i>Formula</i> , Marie Emilie Gilchrist.....	December
<i>For a Fan</i> , Hilary Hollister.....	May
Fraser, Abbott, <i>A Picture of Indian Summer</i>	December
Frost, Robert, <i>In a Disused Graveyard</i>	August
<i>The Kitchen Chimney</i>	August
<i>Gathering Leaves</i>	August
<i>Gathering Leaves</i> , Robert Frost.....	August
<i>Ghoul</i> , Joseph Auslander.....	February
Gilchrist, Helen Ives, <i>Old Andrew</i>	August
<i>Three Trees</i>	September
Gilchrist, Marie Emilie, <i>Answers</i>	December
<i>Influence</i>	December
<i>The Illusionist</i>	December
<i>Formula</i>	December
<i>Girls</i> , Robert Louis Burgess.....	May
<i>Good-bye</i> , Guiseppe Cautela.....	November
<i>Grotesque</i> , David Morton.....	September
<i>Group</i> , Louise Townsend Nicholl.....	November
<i>Gypsy</i> , Vernon Patterson.....	February
Hall, Carolyn, <i>In an Empty Church</i>	June
<i>Two Songs</i>	November
Hall, Hazel, <i>Rain</i>	August
Haste, Gwendolen, <i>Last Days of the Scout</i>	September
<i>Hawaiian Hero</i> , Genevieve Taggard.....	March
Hellman, Rhoda, <i>Puddle</i>	May
Higgins, Annie, <i>My Hands</i>	February
<i>Jewelry</i>	February
<i>Midnight</i>	February
Hill, Frank Ernest, <i>Midnight Tenement</i>	May
Hoard, Prescott, <i>Cobwebbed Trapeze Performer</i>	June
Holden, Raymond, <i>Escape</i>	June
<i>To Nine Who Vanished Long Ago</i>	June
<i>Though Almost Anything</i>	June
<i>The Lost</i>	August
<i>Legend</i>	October
<i>How One Walked in Sorrow</i> , David Morton.....	July
Hollister, Hilary, <i>For a Fan</i>	May
<i>How the Constable Carried the Pot Across the Public Square</i> , Wallace Stevens.....	April
Hoyt, H. Underwood, <i>An Unprejudiced Mind</i>	July
<i>More Lovely Than a Mountainside</i>	July
<i>Never a Fox</i>	September
Hubbell, Lindley Williams, <i>To All Dead Women</i>	August
<i>Sonnet</i>	February
<i>Humming Bird, The</i> , Beatrice Ravenel.....	September
Humphries, Rolfe, Eloi, Eloi.....	February
<i>Mistress Death</i>	February
<i>Hysteria</i> , Earl Daniels.....	March
<i>I Went Out Alone</i> , Joseph Auslander.....	September
<i>Ice Agony</i> , Louise Townsend Nicholl.....	September
"If I May Choose My Dream," Earl Daniels.....	March
<i>Il Magnopoco</i> , Joseph Auslander.....	August
<i>Illusionist, The</i> , Marie Emilie Gilchrist.....	December
<i>In a Disused Graveyard</i> , Robert Frost.....	August
<i>In a Theatre</i> , John Masfield.....	June
<i>In an Empty Church</i> , Carolyn Hall.....	June
<i>In December</i> , Elisabeth Thomas.....	January
<i>In the Esplanade of the Invalides</i> , George O'Neil.....	May
<i>Inarticulate</i> , Mark Van Doren.....	October
<i>Influence</i> , Marie Emilie Gilchrist.....	December
<i>Initiate</i> , Louise Townsend Nicholl.....	February
<i>Interiors</i> , Jeanne d'Orge.....	May
<i>Jezabel</i> , Joseph Auslander.....	June
<i>Jewelry</i> , Annie Higgins.....	February
<i>Johns, Orrick, Country Rhymes</i>	October
<i>To a Brother</i>	October
<i>Poet and Planter</i>	October
<i>Juggernaut</i> , Leonora Speyer.....	March
<i>Kerry Nursing Song</i> , Padraic Colum.....	August
Kiang Kang-hu—see Witter Bynner.....	
<i>King in Egypt, A</i> , David Morton.....	September

INDEX—Continued

Kitchen Chimney, The, Robert Frost.....August
Kopeloff, Nicholas, First Spring.....June

Lace Shroud, Winifred Welles.....November
Last Days of the Scout, Gwendolen Haste.....September
Lean, Wade Oliver.....November
Leaves, Maud Elfrid Uchold.....December
Lechlitner, Ruth, Dream Fear.....December
Presence.....December
Legend, Raymond Holden.....October
Lewis, May, Onlookers.....January
Light on the Rock, The, Abbie Huston Evans.....July

Lindsey, Therese, Lost.....January
Lost, Therese Lindsey.....January
Lost, The, Raymond Holden.....August
Low Tide, Kenneth Slade Alling.....November
"Love in Whose Name," Peter Bowdoin.....May

Mackall, Virginia Woods, Medicine.....March
Many Waters.....June
Struck.....August
Macy, John, Cosmic Scandal.....April
Numbers.....April
Passage.....April
The Poet.....April
Vigil.....April
Well?.....April
Complets in Criticism.....May
Madison Square, Louise Townsend Nicholl.....November
Many Waters, Virginia Woods Mackall.....June
Masefield, John, In a Theatre.....June
Mayer, Edwin Justus, Retreat.....March
Medicine, Virginia Woods Mackall.....March
Merryman, Mildred Plew, That Year.....December
To a Pickaninny Eating a Persimmon.....February
Metzger, Elizabeth Stewart, Ambition.....November
Meeker, Marjorie, But Like Mad Builders.....December
Walls.....December
Only the Bright Derision.....February
Sentimental History.....February
Midnight, Annie Higgins.....February
Midnight Tenement, Frank Ernest Hill.....May
Milkman's Boy, The, Stirling Bowen.....December
Miller, Mary B., Rain-Drenched.....October
Mistress Death, Rolfe Humphries.....February
Moon Cattle, Joseph Auslander.....June
More Lovely Than a Mountainside, H. Underwood Hoyt.....July
Morning, George O'Neil.....July
Morton, David, How One Walked in Sorrow.....July
Grotesque.....September
A King in Egypt.....September
Scars.....January
Mountain Road, Belle Turnbull.....February
My Hands, Annie Higgins.....February

Narcissus—A Foreground, Peter Crool.....March
Never a Fox, H. Underwood Hoyt.....September
New England Verses, Wallace Stevens.....April
Nicholl, Louise Townsend, Wooden Spades.....September

Icy Agony.....September
Black Mist.....September
Group.....November

Dead Leaves.....November
Madison Square.....November
Initiate.....February
Night, London, A, Zoe Akins.....September
Numbers, John Macy.....April

O Be Not Silent, George O'Neil.....July
O'Neil, George, In the Esplanade of the Invalides.....May
Refuge.....May
Song of the Barren Year.....May
Morning.....July
O Be Not Silent.....July
On the Bow of a Ship.....August
Oh, Let the Summer Mould You, Lucy Hale Sturges.....August
Old Andrew, Helen Ives Gilchrist.....August
Oliver, Wade, Lean.....November
On My Table, A Moth, Earl Daniels.....March
On the Bow of a Ship, George O'Neil.....August
Onlookers, May Lewis.....January
Only the Bright Derision, Marjorie Meeker.....February
Owl, The, Kenneth Slade Alling.....September

Passage, John Macy.....April
Pater, Kenneth Slade Alling.....January
Patterson, Vernon, Gypsy.....February
Penitent, Christine Turner Curtis.....January
Percy, William Alexander, Rain Patter.....December
Phaedra Pasiphaeia, Arnault de Ventadour.....May
Picture of Indian Summer, A, Abbott Fraser.....December
Pigeon, Mark Van Doren.....January
Plovers, Padraic Colum.....January
Poet and Planter, Orrick Johns.....October
Poet, The, John Macy.....April
Porter, Katherine Anne, Two Songs from Mexico.....January
Presence, Ruth Lechlitner.....December
Proud Song, A, Marguerite Wilkinson.....January
Puddle, Rhoda Hellman.....May

Question, Isadore Schneider.....July

Rabbit Hunt, The, W. L. Flanagan.....November
Rain, Hazel Hall.....August
Rain-Crow, Mark Van Doren.....January
Rain-Drenched, Mary B. Miller.....October
Rain Patter, William Alexander Percy.....December
Raymond, Bernard, *After Plenty*.....July
Ravenel, Beatrice, The Humming Bird.....September
Spring Moss.....September
Refuge, George O'Neil.....May
Retreat, Edwin Justus Mayer.....March
River Snow, Mark Van Doren.....January
Road Song, Benjamin Rosenbaum.....December
Rosenbaum, Benjamin, The Etcher.....June
Road Song.....December
Rust, Dust, Fountain Water, Leonora Speyer.....April
Salomé, George Brandon Saul.....August
Saul, George Brandon, Salomé.....August
Scars, David Morton.....January
Schneider, Isadore, Question.....July
Sea Gulls, Charles Divine.....January
Sea Shells, Annice Calland.....February

INDEX—Continued

Sentimental History, Marjorie Meeker.....February
Shape of the Coroner, The, Wallace Stevens.....May
Shore, Elisabeth Thomas.....November
Sink, The, Jeanne d'Orge.....May
Song, Allan Davis.....February
Song of the Barren Year, George O'Neil.....May
Sonnet, Lindley Williams Hubbell.....February
Sorrow, Maud Elfrid Uschold.....December
Speyer, Leonora, *Juggernaut*.....March
Rust, Dust, Fountain Water.....April
Two Moon Whims.....April
Spread Table, The, Abbie Huston Evans.....July
Spring Moss, Beatrice Ravenel.....September
Stevens, Wallace, *Floral Decorations for Bananas*.....April
How the Constable Carried the Pot Across the Public Square.....April
New England Verses.....April
The Shape of the Coroner.....May
Stones, The, Louise Bogan.....June
Stork, Charles Wharton, *To One Who Has Suffered*.....December
Struck, Virginia Woods Mackall.....August
Sturges, Lucy Hale, *Oh, Let the Summer Mould You*.....August

Taggard, Genevieve, *Hawaiian Hero*.....March
Teacher, The, Mary Armatine Ward.....January
Tell Us, Charon!, Myla Fletcher.....April
Tension, Harold Lewis Cook.....July
Termination, Howard McKinley Corning.....February
That Year, Mildred Plew Merryman.....December
Thayer, Harriet Maxon, *A Very Old Lady*.....March
Three Women at Low Tide, Kenneth Slade Alling.....November
Thomas, Elisabeth, *Shore*.....November
The Choice.....January
In December.....January
Though Almost Anything, Raymond Holden.....June
Though We Protest, Eda Lou Walton.....December
Three Trees, Helen Ives Gilchrist.....September
To a Brother, Orrick Johns.....October
To a Maryland Yellow-Throat, Kenneth Slade Alling.....July
To a Pickaninny Eating a Persimmon, Mildred Plew Merryman.....February
To All Dead Women, Lindley Williams Hubbell.....August
To Nine Who Vanished Long Ago, Raymond Holden.....June
To One Who Asked, Kenneth Slade Alling.....May
To One Who Has Suffered, Charles Wharton Stork.....December
To the Younger Set, Margaret Widdemer.....January
Tracks, Harold Vinal.....November
Trio, Louise Bogan.....June
Two Moon Whims, Leonora Speyer.....April
Two Songs, Carolyn Hall.....November
Two Songs From Mexico, Katherine Anne Porter.....January
Turnbull, Belle, *Mountain Road*.....February
Turns, Myla Fletcher.....May

Unprejudiced Mind, An, H. Underwood Hoyt.....July

Uschold, Maud Elfrid, *Sorrow*.....December
Apprentice.....December
Leaves.....December

Van Doren, Mark, *Inarticulate*.....October
Fall.....October
River Snow.....January
Rain-Crow.....January
Pigeon.....January
Very Old Lady, A, Harriet Maxon Thayer.....March
Vigil, John Macy.....April
Vinal, Harold, *First Voyage*.....August
What Women Say.....August
Tracks.....November
Vine, The, Abbie Huston Evans.....November
Voice in the Night, A, Martha Webster.....November

Walls, Marjorie Meeker.....December
Walton, Eda Lou, *Though We Protest*.....December
Ward, Mary Armatine, *The Teacher*.....January
Webster, Martha, *A Voice in the Night*.....November
Well?, John Macy.....April
Welles, Winifred, *Lace Shroud*.....November
What Women Say, Harold Vinal.....August
Widdemer, Margaret, *To the Younger Set*.....January
Wilkinson, Marguerite, *A Proud Song*.....January
Will He Give Him a Stone, Abbie Huston Evans.....November
Winter Woods, Ernestine Evans.....October
Wooden Spades, Louise Townsend Nicholl.....September
World's May Darken, Power Dalton.....December
Wylie, Elinor, *Enchanter's Handmaiden*.....October

EDITORIAL

New York's Theatre, Maxwell Anderson.....December
"Words as They Chanceably Fall from the Mouth", Carolyn Hall.....December

IN REVIEW

A Jewel Hard Enough, Kenneth Slade Alling.....July
After Arcetri, Pitts Sanborn.....April
Anthologies for Boys and Girls, Carolyn Hall.....August
Cameos from Mycenae, Kenneth Slade Alling.....April
Fresh Herbs, Louise Townsend Nicholl.....July
German Poets, Joseph Auslander.....June
Heroic Poetry, Padraic Colum.....March
"Herrick's Kin", Kenneth Slade Alling.....November
Last Poems by A. E. Housman, Kenneth Slade Alling.....March
Lawrence Into Wolf, Louise Townsend Nicholl.....January
Louise Bogan's Book, Louise Townsend Nicholl.....October
Naturalism and Fantasy, Padraic Colum.....August
O Carolina, Winifred Welles.....June
Orchestral Verse, Pitts Sanborn.....May
Quiet Singing, George O'Neil.....September
Robert Frost's New Book, Padraic Colum.....January
Shakespeare's Cryptography, Pitts Sanborn.....May
Voices from the "Yard", Pitts Sanborn.....April
Waters in Rock, Louise Townsend Nicholl.....March

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NOTE

Winifred Welles has resigned from *The Measure*. Rolfe Humphries, formerly of California and now teaching in a boys' school in New York, has been elected to the editorial board. He will be the active editor for the spring months, March, April and May, with Genevieve Taggard as his assistant.

ANOTHER POETRY PRIZE

The Garden Magazine is offering a prize of \$50 for "a new and original poem on the Dahlia," not exceeding six stanzas in length. Verse submitted must be "of joyous mood in any lyric form." Contestants, who may submit any number of entries with their name and address on each, must send their contributions to the Dahlia Poem Contest, care of Editors of The Garden Magazine, Garden City, N. Y., before October 1, 1924.

CONTRIBUTORS

GLENN WARD DRESBACH's new book, *The Enchanted Mesa*, will be brought out by Holt in the spring.

ANNICE CALLAND writes from Port au Prince, Haiti.

BELLE TURNBULL who has published some poetry is interested in interpreting the moods of Colorado. She lives in Colorado Springs.

ANNA KARFUNKLE is a native New Yorker and is connected with a New York studio. Her poems have appeared in a number of magazines.

ALLAN DAVIS was born in Pittsburgh and graduated from Harvard in 1907 where he was an editor of the Harvard Monthly. He is a lawyer and is the author of several books.

HOWARD MCKINLEY CORNING is a young writer in Portland, Ore.

VERNON PATTERSON sent his *Gypsy* from Berkeley, Calif.

Of the other familiar poets there is no particular news.

The Measure

A Journal of Poetry

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